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BELIEF IN GOD.*

BY PROF. F. MAX MUELLER.

To my mind the historical proof of the existence of God, which is supplied us by the history of the religions of the world, has never been refuted; and cannot be refuted. It forms the foundation of all other proofs, call them cosmological, ontological, or teleological; or, rather, it absorbs them all, and makes them all superfluous.

There are those who declare that they require no proof at all for the existence of a Supreme Being, or, if they did, that they would find it in revelation. Suppose they wanted no proof themselves, would they really not care at all to know how the human race, and how they themselves, came in possession of what, I suppose, they value as their most precious inheritance. Do they really think that in this case an examination of the ancient title-deeds might safely be dispensed with, while with regard to much less precious holdings it is considered a plain duty to guard these documents with the greatest care.

An appeal to revelation is of no avail in deciding questions of this kind. The history of religions teaches us that the same appeal to a special revelation is made, not only by Christianity, but by the defenders of Brahmanism, of Zoroastrianism, and of Mohammedanism, and where is the tribunal to adjudicate on the conflicting appeals of these and other claimants? The believer in the Vedas is as thoroughly convinced of the superhuman origin of his ancient hymns as the Zoroastrian of that of the Gathas and the Mohammedan of that of the Surahs; and the subtle arguments by which each, but more particularly the Brahman, supports his claims, would put some of our ablest casuists to shame. The followers of every one of these religions declare their belief in the revealed character of their own religion, never in that of any other religion. Many persons believe, and believe honestly, in visions they have had themselves, never in the visions claimed by other people. We may appeal to revelation in the court of our own conscience, but, before the court of universal appeal, we require different proofs for the faith that is in us.

Our belief in God as the author of all that exists, whether we call Him father, or creator, or supporter of the world, has its deepest, its only living roots in that ancient, universal stratum of thought which postulated an agent in the sky, the sun, the fire, and the storm-wind; which was not satisfied with the mere play of appearances in nature, but yearned to know what it was that appeared; which felt the limits of the finite in all its sensuous perceptions, and in feeling the limits, felt at the same time the presence of something that was beyond those limits. This dissatisfaction with the finite, this struggle after the non-finite, this search for an agent for every act, of a mover for every movement, whatever shape it took, whatever name it claimed, forms the primitive and indestructible foundation of man's faith in God. If it is taken away, people may indeed have dogma, and may have creeds, but they cannot have their own ineradicable conviction that there is and that there must be a God.

Dogma can supply no argument against Atheism. Dogma is what my excellent colleague at Edinburgh, Mr. Hutchison Stirling, has very truly called mere *Vorstellung* which requires for its philosophical foundation the *Begriff*. But that *Begriff* has a history, and it is this history of the *Begriff* which to my mind is the true, because unanswerable answer to all Atheism. I should go so far as to say that the history of religion is the best proof of religion, just as the growth of the oak-tree is the best proof of the oak-tree. There may be excrescences, there may be dead leaves, there may be broken branches, but the oak-tree is there, once for all, whether in the sacred groves of Germany, or at Dodona, or in the Himalayan forests. It is there, not by our own will, but by itself, or by a Higher Will. There may be corruptions, there may be antiquated formulas, there may be sacred writings flung to the wind, but religion is there, once for all, in all its various representations. You can as little sweep away the oak-tree with all its millions of seeds from the face of the earth, as you can eradicate religion from the human heart.

The history of religion teaches us that the one everlasting conviction on which the whole of Natural Religion has been built from the beginning of the world is *true*. That is the conviction that there is an Infinite behind the finite, that there is an agent behind all acts, there is a *God in nature*. Convince the hu-

* From the report of the fourth Gifford Lecture in the *Christian World*, sent by Prof. Max Müller.

man understanding that there can be acts without agents, that there can be a limit without something beyond, that there can be a finite without a non-finite, and you have proved that there is no God. But let it be shown that the universality of that belief rests on that without which sense would not be sense, reason would not be reason, man would not be man, and we may say that for man as he is, for reason as it is, nay even for the perceptions of the senses as they are, belief in something infinite, in an agent, in a god, is irresistible. All names that human language has invented may be imperfect, may be deceptive, and may have to be replaced by newer and ever truer names. But the name 'I AM THAT I AM' will remain for those who think Semitic thought, while to those who speak Aryan languages it will be difficult to invent a better name than that of the Vedanta, *Sat-Kit ananda*, He who is, who knows, and who is blessed.

IS THE INFINITE A RELIGIOUS IDEA?

PROF. MAX MUELLER'S view of religion is based on the conception of the infinite. His idea of God is the infinite behind the finite. He says:

"Convince the human understanding that there can be acts without agents, that there can be a limit without something beyond, that there can be a finite without a non-finite, and you have proved that there is no God."

Is this not going rather too far? Does the agent supposed to be behind the processes of nature constitute nature's divinity? Prof. Max Müller's view of God is scientific as well as radical, but it makes of religion a metaphysical speculation; it identifies it with the conception of an hypothetic something behind nature of which we really know nothing. It appears very desirable to free religion from this metaphysical element and build it upon the positive facts of our experience which will always remain its safest foundation.

Positivism knows of no agent behind the natural phenomena; it dispenses also with the agent behind the psychical processes of soul-life. Positivism is an economy of thought. Instead of viewing acts as motions produced by the pressure of an agent behind them, we think the act and agent together as one. The agent is *in*, not *behind* the act. The act is the agent itself.

Positivism is commonly represented as atheism just as much as the view of the orthodox Oxford Professor would have been decried as atheism some ten or twenty years ago. And I grant that Positivism is not Theism, if Theism means the belief in a personal God who being shaped into the image of man, is conceived as an individual being, as a great world-ego swayed by considerations and even by passions and emotions, thinking now of this now of that thought, and regulating the affairs of the universe as it pleases him like a powerful monarch.

There is nothing more or less divine in the infinite than in any other mathematical, logical, or scientific idea. The infinite has one advantage only—if it be an advantage—over other ideas; its nature is less understood. But if there were anything divine in the conception of the infinite, why do we not use such formulas a $\frac{0}{0}$ or tangent 90 degrees, or simply the sign ∞ as holy emblems in our churches?

Prof. Max Müller must have felt this insufficiency of the idea of infinitude as the basis of religion. At least he has on another occasion modified his definition. In a former article of his,* Prof. Max Müller says:

"It may be said in fact it has been said, that the definition of religion which I laid down is too narrow and too arbitrary. . . . I thought it right to modify my first definition of religion as 'the perception of the Infinite,' by narrowing that perception to 'such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man.' I do not deny that in the beginning the perception of the Infinite had often very little to do with moral ideas, and I am quite aware that many religions enjoin what is either not moral or even immoral. But though there are perceptions of the Infinite unconnected as yet with moral ideas, I doubt whether they should be called religious till they assume a moral influence. On this point there may be difference of opinion, but every one may claim the right of his own opinion."

The infinite, it appears to me, is not at all a specially religious idea, and it will be very difficult to prove how the idea of the infinite can ever assume a moral influence, except in a very limited sphere. The powers of nature in their overwhelming influence upon the fate of man in a beneficent and evil way, the light of the sun, the flashes of the thunderstorm, the joy of great triumphs, the enthusiasm after extraordinary successes, our trials and sorrow at the bedside of our beloved ones, the agonies and anxieties of life, in one word definite and actual realities have done much more than the idea of the infinite in the production of religion. I am aware that Prof. Max Müller says: "These finite realities suggest an infinite agent beyond them." But this is no description of religion; it is an interpretation of religious ideas, representing them in a special phase of development.

The infinite may have produced a religious awe in a lonely scholar when he pondered over the problems of its nature and found himself unable to solve them. And it may have stirred a still deeper religious emotion in the mathematical mind who succeeded in solving some of its problems. But the same religious influence must be attributed to any other scientific idea. Was not Kepler overwhelmed with the grandeur of the cosmos when he solved the riddle of the motions of the heavenly bodies? Was not his emotion

* *Fire-Worship and Mythology in their Relation to Religion*, (*The Open Court*, page 2322, No. 146, Vol. IV.—16).

truly religious, and is there anything infinite in his formulas?

It will be noticeable that the infinite as a properly religious idea enjoys a very limited field. The two greatest religious documents are to my mind the Decalogue representing the Old Testament and the Lord's Prayer representing the New Testament; in neither can any idea of the infinite be found. It is true that the Lord's prayer ends with the clause "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen." "Forever" I grant, means infinite time. But it is well known that these words are not genuine with Christ; they have been added by the Christians of the first or second century; and if they were genuine, how incidental is the idea of the infinite, how secondary if compared with the momentous propositions of the prayer itself! It appears that religion would not suffer if the idea of the infinite were entirely dropped from its definition and Prof. Max. Müller's additional clause (i. e. "that which will influence the moral character of man") were made its main essence.

The definition of God as the infinite conveys no clear idea. The popular view of the infinite is very indefinite, and its scientific conception is a thought-symbol for a process never to be finished. The scientific view of the infinite does not represent a complete and real thing, but an incomplete and never to be completed function. Suppose that in measuring the world we arrived at the last star of the farthest milky way and took our stand between the definite reality behind, and empty space before us, is there no divinity in the finite existences we have measured, and is God living in the nothingness of the infinite space that lies beyond us unmeasured and immeasurable?

Let us define God as those realities of our experience to which we have to comform; as those manifestations of nature which we cannot fashion; as those laws of cosmic existence which we have to obey; and atheism will never again rise to overthrow the proofs of an existence of God. God is the authority of moral conduct, and religion is the basis of morality. All ideas which influence the moral character of man are religious while dogmas are either religiously indifferent, as if they represent ideas having no bearing upon moral conduct, or even deeply irreligious, if they are productive of immoral habits. And one of the most immoral church doctrines, not as yet entirely abandoned by orthodox people, is that man should believe blindly. It is a sacred religious duty to investigate the truth most scrupulously. Religion is not belief in the supernatural as the theologian of the old school says, nor is it the search for the infinite, as Prof. Max Müller says. Religion is much simpler. It is our search for truth with the aspiration to regulate our conduct in accord with truth. P. C.

THE QUESTIONS OF AGNOSTICISM.

BY ELLIS THURTELL.

As an independent Agnostic, and a regular reader of *The Open Court* I hope I may be permitted to express the contemplative pleasure given me by the editorial article with the above title in the issue for January 29th.

What is there called the "Agnosticism of Science" is, I believe, the attitude of a strong and growing section of our English Agnostics. Among this section the doctrine of the Unknowable is very much equivalent to the doctrine of the Unknown. And the region of the Unknown has special stress laid upon it, not at all for the purpose of restricting inquiry—as is sometimes represented—but for the purpose of pointing out the actual ignorance of those who assume to have what they are pleased to call supernatural knowledge.

Moreover, those who hold by this form of agnosticism consider that, if there be any advantage in the term "Unknowable," as against the term "Unknown," it lies in the greater emphasis supposed to be laid, by the Spencerian term, on the creation of a common ground, upon which philosophical *naturalists* may meet those philosophical *supernaturalists* who are willing to allow Science an absolutely free pass in every field of investigation—not excepting that of Theology itself.

It certainly does seem to the writer that,—whatever be the precise meaning which our great master, Herbert Spencer, attaches to the word,—the Unknowable must be held to have reference, not to all eternity, but merely to the present time. Even Goethe, whose scientific philosophy was so often tinged with a poetic mysticism, could say: "Man must always in some "sense cling to the belief that the unknowable is "knowable, otherwise speculations would cease." This is of course tantamount to admitting that "unknowable" is in reality only a question-begging epithet, if applied to any criterion of knowledge other than that which we at present possess; and an epithet that may easily be made an excuse for indolent acquiescence in know-nothingness.

It is surely time that some more close and comprehensive agreement than now maintains should be arranged, between such thinkers of the Positive-Monist, and the Agnostic School, as hold in common the "Agnosticism of Science" portrayed in the recent article in question. With all due deference to the able journalistic leaders of either side, I cannot but think that they are sometimes prone to magnify into essential differences what are only individualist distinctions, perfectly compatible with shoulder-to-shoulder philosophic fight against all supernaturalistic opponents.

A DEBATE ON MONEY AND ITS FUNCTIONS.

BY GEN. M. M. TRUMBULL.

THEY had a most animated and exciting debate at the banquet of the *Sunset Club* on the 19th of last month, for the subject was "Money and its functions," a theme fruitful of political superstitions, and illuminated by a spiritual faith in the omnipotence of government to make the numbers three and five exactly equal in quantity and value to each other, an innocent belief in the miraculous power of Congress to engraft new laws upon the ancient scheme of Nature, so that we may gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, or pluck dollars from the tree of legislation, a feat which amounts to the same thing.

The debate was opened by Mr. Clinton Furbish in a glowing speech, witty, sarcastic, and sharp; a speech abounding in assertions proving the "fiat" prerogative of government, its divine authority to create money, and its ability to transmute base matter into diamonds by a touch of its magic wand, as easily as the fairy changed mice into horses in order that the beautiful Cinderella might ride in grandeur to the prince's ball. He said that "fiat money saved the nation," that the soldiers were paid for saving it in "the crisp greenback, the fiat money of the government. And if it is not money to-day, call the roll and pay off Sherman's army, for if they were not paid in greenbacks they have not been paid yet." This was "crisp" as the greenback itself, but it called up a most unlucky reminiscence, the bad character of the greenback, and the mischievous mistake that brought it into being. The vice of it was its limited purchasing power, a corruption incurable by human fiat, and the soldiers were cheated by it; not the soldiers only, but all people dependent upon wages expressed in "dollars." The same objection applies to all paper money not redeemable on demand in the dearest metallic money current in its time.

With much enthusiastic feeling, and a good deal of eloquent "spellbinding," Mr. Furbish glorified the legal tender greenback, and sneered at the gold bug and the silver bug. In the creation of abundant fiat money he beheld the relief and the regeneration of the poor, the solution of the social problem, and the coronation of justice as king over all the nations. As a basis for fiat money, after scornfully rejecting gold and silver, Mr. Furbish offered this, "the power of the people to collect a revenue." In explanation he said, "It rests on the power of the government to collect a revenue beyond a tax, wider than a tax, taking more than you conceive is necessary for a tax, because it takes that value which the community created, which belongs to the community." Here appears to be the "single tax" plan for the confiscation of land values presented as a basis for a paper currency, and in further illustration of his meaning he supposed the government engaged in building roads; it pays for the work in fiat money, this passes into circulation as currency, and gets back to the government again as taxes. In the words of Mr. Furbish, "Issue your money from your government for services rendered. It goes from the government and passes from hand to hand in the transfer of commodities, and returns in the form of revenue to that government, forming the only honest and fair basis of circulation, and stops forever the power to maintain a corner in gold or silver."

All that seems like building our monetary system on a cloud. The foundation on which Mr. Furbish would build a system of paper fiat money is just as intangible and fleeting as a cloud, because the government has not the rightful power of collecting "a revenue beyond a tax, wider than a tax, and more than is necessary for a tax," nor is a stable currency possible on such a shifting foundation as the expenditures of government, because these are a drain on the resources of the people, and never can become an addition to their wealth. No fiat of the government can give a dollar's value to a piece of paper, nor will it pass current for a moment until commercial vitality is given to it by the express or implied promise of the government to redeem it in metallic money having the same value according to its weight before coining as after, and independent of the image and superscription stamped upon it.

For centuries mankind has been afflicted with social wrongs because of the political mistake of governments that they possess the prerogative of creating money. Markets, not governments, determine what is money. No matter what nominal value governments may give to coins or paper bills, their actual value in exchange is fixed in the markets of the world. The commercial value given to a piece of paper by making it a legal tender in the payment of debts is a limited and abnormal value, a dishonest coercion of creditors, and the weakness of it appears in the fact that although government may compel a merchant to accept it in payment of a debt, it cannot compel him to receive it in payment for his goods. Here the fiat becomes impotent, and the legal tender usurpation fails.

The fiat experiment of the French republic is a lesson and a warning. This was much better money than our greenbacks, because it was not only legal tender in payment of debts but in payment for goods also; and besides, it was secured by a pledge of real estate, the confiscated lands of the nobles and the clergy. It was better than a mortgage. The first issue was made on All Fools day 1790, and amounted to $80,000,000. This answered such an admirable purpose as what Mr. Furbish calls "a tool of trade," and was such an

easy and picturesque addition to the national wealth, that paternal statesmanship multiplied it by three, and as there was no scarcity of paper and printing presses, $240,000,000 of this fiat money was issued before the end of the year.

In addition to its "legal tender" and real estate security, this money was further supported by the fervent patriotism which then animated France. It was the mark of an aristocrat and traitor to discredit the money of the republic. Still, for all that, it was at a discount of ten per cent. on New Year's day 1791. It was alleged as a reason for this that there was not enough of it to satisfy the wants of trade. So they issued a million dollars more of it by September 1792, but in spite of every stimulant its credit languished, and before Christmas it was at a discount of thirty-seven per cent.

The government greatly annoyed at the folly of the people who preferred coarse, materialistic silver and gold to "crisp" and pictorial paper, demonetised those unpatriotic metals, and forbade the use of them; and in order that the dollar might have "a uniform purchasing power," they fixed the maximum price of bread, and meat, and coal, and other things; but by a strange oversight they neglected to say how much wheat should grow on an acre of land; or how much wool a sheep should wear. They also made it a penal offense to ask any more for goods than the legal price; or to refuse the legal tenders in payment for merchandise, and as the "volume" of the currency was not yet large enough to restore confidence, to relieve the money market, to move the crops, to lift the mortgage, and perform other necessary miracles, they increased it by September 1793, to one thousand million dollars; but the laws of the market were paramount over the laws of the land, and the fiat money was at a discount of 55 per cent. However, the printing press never tired, and the making of money went on, until by the end of 1795, they had issued $4,000,000,000, and it was at a discount of 99 per cent. Then the government decreed the penalty of death against those who should discredit this money, or refuse to take it at its face value for all goods and commodities whatsoever; and still feeling that the volume of it was insufficient for the wants of trade, they increased it to nine thousand million dollars, forty five thousand million francs. Then it reached par—it was worth nothing. And no fiat has been able to give it any value unto this day.

The chief speaker on the other side was Mr. Lyman J. Gage, who traced the evolution of money from shells and coonskins up to gold and silver which now hold supreme dominion as money, by virtue of the inexorable sentence that the fittest shall survive. "It does not need a moment's thought," said Mr. Gage, "to satisfy us that it was by a true *survival of the fittest* that gold and silver finally obtained universal recognition as money, and superseded all other forms of it." Further, he explained, that gold and silver are universal money, not dependent upon coinage for its quality, nor upon statutes for its value. He showed the mistake of attributing to the stamp upon a coin the money value which really lies under it. He also denied that the legal tender sanction which the law places upon the issues of its mint gave any new and original value to such legal tender coin.

Mr. Gage explained the apparent paradox that seventy-five cents worth of silver when coined into a dollar becomes equal to one hundred cents in gold. He showed that the cheaper dollar is indirectly redeemed by the government, every time it is received for taxes at the value of a dollar in gold; but he also said that the time would come when by reason of the superabundance of silver coins, the government would not be able to do this, but would be compelled to pay out silver dollars at their bullion value, thereby putting the business of the country on a silver basis, gold being driven out as currency, but earning a good living in the business of discounting silver and greenback dollars.

Several other members of the club reinforced the arguments of Mr. Furbish, and Mr. Gage, by pertinent remarks, but nobody exposed that arrogant pretension of governments which impels them to interfere with money and its functions, especially that dishonest usurpation of authority to make anything whatever a legal tender in payment of debts. No earthly power can do that. The law that attempts to do it is void in morals as it is mischievous in policy. A debt contains a moral obligation which none but the debtor can discharge.

So, also, nobody denied the right of government to nickname coins in order to give them an arbitrary and artificial character expressive of no quality in the coins. Why not make an honest ounce of silver a monetary unit and name it truthfully an "Ounce." If the name of every coin expressed the actual weight of it, the multiple or fraction of an "Ounce," the people would not be so easily deceived by the fiscal tricks of governments. Florins, francs, dollars, and shillings, are deceitful nicknames, intended to conceal the quality of the money they pretend to describe. They may be of different weights at different times, but no government could coin three hundred grains of silver and call it an "Ounce" without being at once detected, nor could such a coin be made available to cheat the working man out of a part of his wages.

The debate at the Sunset club while excellent as far as it went, would have been more instructive had it reached further down towards the moral elements of money and its functions.

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF ETHICS.

BY MORRISON I. SWIFT.

THE nervous system is the physiological seat of morality. The breaking of the balance of the nervous system is, in that degree, the breaking up of morality, and is already hell. The nervous system is a delicate musical instrument; if you disturb the least of its atoms the harmony begins to falter. It depends upon such apparently remote things as the girth of the chest, the lifting power, and the density of the flesh. There is a moment of utmost physical perfection and at that very moment the nervous system is playing the ninth symphony and singing supernal songs. A day indoors drives out Beethoven and shuts up heaven. A year at the counter, or desk, or dictionary, may forever cloud the face of God. When love dies God dies, said Tolstoï, if not in these words by suggestion in his wonderful title "Where love is there God is." Love and God are functions of the nervous system. In that moment of utmost physical perfection love is alive and God is there. God dies by inches out of most lives. These beautiful presences, God and love, depend on the love and God capacity. An ounce of food taken daily beyond the need of food banishes daily more than an ounce of God. The progressive atrophy of the tissues through want of use denotes the atrophy of God and love. Love is the self-annihilating instinct of one being in the presence of another—and the power of instincts is greatest in the prime of man. Love is charity, and in the immense recuperation morning of life generosity is supreme.

Let us be not mocked. Age kills God.

> "What is it to grow old?
> . . . . . .
> It is to spend long days
> And not once feel that we were ever young;
> . . . . . .
> It is to suffer this,
> And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
> Deep in our hidden heart
> Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
> But no emotion—none."*

We must grow old, but we need not grow prematurely old. Every departure from the perfect physical life is expiated by premature age. Age neither suffers nor enjoys. Where feeling is not there God is not. The tranquility of an old man is not happiness. "Do you say that old age is unfeeling?" asks Oliver Wendell Holmes. "It has not vital energy enough to supply the waste of the more exhausting emotions." Can we postpone old age? This is the question at the heart of all Bibles and moral treatises. This same youthful octogenarian, Dr. Holmes, gives us warning with genial sadness of what must happen to every daring survivor who scales the white peaks of age. "Nature's kindly anodyne is telling upon us more and more with every year. Our old doctors used to give an opiate which they called 'the black drop.' It was stronger than laudanum, and, in fact, a dangerously powerful narcotic. Something like this is that potent drug in Nature's pharmacopœia which she reserves for the time of need,—the later stages of life. She commonly begins administering it at about the time of the 'grand climacteric,' the ninth septennial period, the sixty-third year. More and more freely she gives it, as the years go on, to her grey-haired children, until, if they last long enough, every faculty is benumbed, and they drop off quietly into sleep under its benign influence." Happiness is contingent upon the degree of life and sensation, and these have ebbed low in the old man. "Time, the inexorable, does not threaten him with the scythe so often as with the sand bag. He does not cut, but he stuns and stupefies."*

There are no tumultuous sufferings in age, but I cannot acquit the prematurely old of the sorrows of hell. In them "festers the dull remembrance of a change" that wisdom might have deferred.

Physical and moral are at last one. They have the same root and trunk; we differentiate them by analysis, and fictitiously. Moral pains are as physical as the hand or foot. They are the discomfiture of the physical elements, and are caused alike by infractions of the so-called moral law and by bodily distempers. A cold not only sharpens the knives of conscience but its effect is incipient moral insanity. We may be sure that conduct which in none of its consequences tends to the destruction of the physical is not immoral. The greater part of moral suffering in the world is the product of a misunderstanding. Actions are supposed to be injurious that are not injurious, and they are met with the moral lash. The moral castigation causes unmeasured suffering but suffering that was gratuitous, mistaken, ignorance-born. "Terrible to me are the awful sufferings from trifles and unnecessary catastrophies," said Rakhmétof.†

Thus at last all morality and all religion, all questions of the conduct of life and the attainment of happiness and heaven and God, return in the grand sweep of the circle wherein the universe is compassed to this,—the perfection of man's body. Whatever goods we know are ascending goods while the sun of life goes up, lessening all the fading afternoon until darkness sombrely invests them and terminates all. It were worthy the ecstasies and sacrifices of all the best of a generation or of ten generations to establish this central and spheric character of the body; at bottom the groping aim of fetish worshipper and priest and scientist in all generations since the cenozoic time, although obscured by many obscurations of theory, conscious purpose and method.

* Matthew Arnold, *Growing Old.*

* *Over the Tea Cups*, p. 30.

† In Tchernusheosky's *A Vital Question*

CORRESPONDENCE.

APOSTLES OF THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE.

To the Editor of The Open Court :—

I HAVE looked in vain in the literary periodicals of the last few years for any adequate notice of the *Journal Intime* of Henri Frederic Amiel, 'the lonely Genevese Professor' as Mrs. Ward calls him in her Introduction to her admirable translation of the two volumes published by Macmillan & Co. in 1885.

The authoress of "Robert Elsmere" declares that Amiel "speaks for the life of to-day as no other single voice has yet spoken for it." As a contribution of the religion of the future which is sure to arise, and which is indeed now well above the horizon, the thoughts and speculations of our author are invaluable. As formative influences leading to the highest, most spiritual, truly religious life I would place in the hands of our young people these two precious volumes with the valuable Introduction, and the writings of our own Emerson. I am more and more persuaded the older I grow, that it is not the quantity so much as the quality of what one reads and digests that tells. The author of "Nature," "The Conduct of Life," and the other priceless essays, enlarges, enriches, and enlightens the mind perhaps more than any other writer of our day. The great secret of his charm and influence is, that his is an essentially *modern* mind. Emerson like Amiel speaks most emphatically for the "life of to-day." "Every man is a scholar potentially and does not need any one good so much as this of right thought," says Emerson, and adds "the true scholar is the Church. Only the duties of intellect must be owned. Down with these dapper trimmers and sychophants! Let us have masculine and divine men, formidable law-givers, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, who warp the churches of the world from their traditions and penetrate them through and through with original perception. The intellectual man lives in perpetual victory." And now to return after our digression to Amiel. No question is so important and so deeply interesting as the religious question—or in other words the question of the so-called supernatural. Is religion possible without a belief in or at least acceptance of miracles? Now hear Amiel on this subject. In a notice of Ernest Havet's "Origines du Christianisme," he says: "The author for instance has no clear idea of religion; and his philosophy of history is superficial. He is a Jacobin. 'The Republic and Free Thought'—he cannot get beyond that. This curt and narrow school of opinion is the refuge of men of independent mind, who have been scandalised by the colossal fraud of ultramontanism; but it leads rather to cursing history than to understanding it. It is the criticism of the eighteenth century, of which the general result is purely negative. But Voltairianism is only the half of the philosophic mind. Hegel frees thought in a very different way. Havet too, makes another mistake. He regards Christianity as synonymous with Roman Catholicism and with the Church. I know very well that the Roman Church does the same, and that with her the assimilation is a matter of sound tactics; but scientifically it is inexact. We ought not even to identify Christianity with the Gospel, nor the Gospel with religion in general. It is the business of critical precision to clear away these perpetual confusions in which Christian practice and Christian preaching abound. To disentangle ideas, to distinguish and limit them, to fit them into their true place and order, is the first duty of science whenever it lays hold upon such chaotic and complex things as manners, idioms, or beliefs. Entanglement is the condition of life; order and clearness are the signs of serious and successful thought. Formerly it was the ideas of nature which were a tissue of errors and incoherent fancies; now it is the turn of moral and psychological ideas. The best issue from the present Babel would be the formation or the sketching out of a truly scientific science of man."

One more quotation to illustrate the manner in which such a consummate scholar as Amiel approaches this great subject of religion. "But does the study of nature allow of the maintenance of those local revelations which are called Mosaism, Christianity, Islamism? These religions, founded upon an infantine cosmogony, and upon a chimerical history of humanity, can they bear confronting with modern astronomy and geology? The present mode of escape, which consists in trying to satisfy the claims of both science and faith—of the science which contradicts all the ancient beliefs, and the faith which in the case of things that are beyond nature and incapable of verification, affirms them on her own responsibility only. This mode of escape cannot last forever. Every fresh cosmical conception demands a religion which corresponds to it."

There is another book which is rich in suggestions and full of "formative influences." Renan's "Recollections of my Youth," translated by C. B. Pitman and published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883. The preface is especially worth reading over and over again. Allow me to give you one or two quotations from the book itself. "The very effort to shake off opinions in some respects unreasonable, had its advantages. Because a Paris flibbertigibbet disposes with a joke of creeds, from which Pascal with all his reasoning powers, could not shake himself free, it must not be concluded that the *ganache* is superior to Pascal. I confess that I at times feel humiliated to think that it cost me five or six years of arduous research, and the study of Hebrew, the Semitic lanlanguages, Gesenius and Ewald to arrive at the result which this urchin achieves in a twinkling. These pilings of Pelion upon Ossa seem to me when looked at in this light, a mere waste of time. But Père Hardoum observed that he had not got up at four o'clock every morning for forty years to think as all the world thought. So I am loath to admit that I have been at so much pains to fight a mere *chimera bombinans*. No, I cannot think that my labors have been all in vain, nor that victory is to be won in theology as cheaply as the scoffers would have us believe. There are, in reality, but few people who have a right not to believe in Christianity. If the great mass of people only knew how strong is the net woven by the theologians, how difficult it is to break the threads of it, how much erudition has been spent upon it, and what a power of criticism is required to unravel it all. . . . . I have noticed that some men of talent who have set themselves too late in life the task have been taken in the toils and have not been able to extricate themselves."

Once more one of the most learned and certainly distinguished of modern Frenchmen declares, "I no longer believe Christianity to be the supernatural summary of all that men can know; but I still believe that life is the most frivolous of things, unless it is regarded as one great and constant duty. Oh! my beloved old teachers," he exclaims, "Yes, I have said that your history was very short measure, that your critique had no existence, and that your natural philosophy fell far short of that which leads us to accept as a fundamental dogma. '*There is no special supernatural*;' but in the main I am still your disciple." "Life is only of value by devotion to what is true and good."

In conclusion allow me to call your attention to a very remarkable address by Principal Fairbairn at the opening of Mansfield College, Oxford, in 1889, and published in the *Contemporary Review* during the summer, I think, of that year—one or two quotations must suffice, but I trust that your readers will turn to the address and ponder every word of it, especially as it was written by an orthodox clergyman. "If the history of the Universities proves anything, it is this: that it is impossible to exclude from them religion and religious questions. The local or the peculiar may be shut out, but the universal, the all pervading cannot be expelled. Now religion is as it were the one ubiquitous spirit in the realm of knowledge, pierce the realm at any part and you are

sure to touch religion. . . . It is impossible to study literature and take no account of the Supreme Book of our race, with the immense literature it has created in every tongue used by civilized man. . . . The body of truth is one, as the spirit of religion is ubiquitous, and to dissect it into a multitude of isolated atoms, each limited to its own small point in space without contact or connection with any other, would be to make a circle of the sciences and a university which embodies it alike impossible. . . . Men who believe dare not be silent about their beliefs. The enthusiasm of faith lives all the more intensely that its right to be is denied; and the very attempt to teach knowledge without religion would evoke the victorious and protesting resistance of the men who believe that all knowledge is religious."

I have been a constant reader of your valuable paper from its beginning, and I know, there are men who have long forsaken the old dogmas or more truly have exhausted and appropriated their meaning and significance, but who still believe with Renan that all religions may be defective and partial; but religion is none the less a divine element in humanity, and the mark of a superior fate, and with Goethe that God is now constantly active in the higher natures to attract the lower ones. I would counsel all such—strongly and their name is legion—to 'read, and inwardly digest' Emerson's writings, Amiel's Journal, Renan's "Recollections of my Youth," Principal Fairbairn's address, Mansfield College, Oxford, *Contemporary Review*, 1889.

Cannes, France. ATHERTON BLIGHT.

BOOK REVIEWS.

THE UTILITY AND MORALITY OF VIVISECTION. By *G. Gore*, LL.D., F. R. S. LONDON: J. W. Kolckmann.

That this pamphlet, which is issued by the Association for the Advancement of Medicine by Research, will have any effect over the mind of what may be termed the sentimental anti-vivisectionist we do not believe. It is nevertheless an admirable contribution to the controversy, and its perusal would convince any unprejudiced reader that the indiscriminate charges made against vivisectors of cruelty and immorality are quite unjustified. Dr. Gore well summarises the question when he says "the painful alternative of the present case is—either experiments on animals must be made, or the wholesale pain, disease, and slaughter of man and other animals by pestilences, epidemics, small-pox, scarlatina, foot and mouth disease, anthrax, etc., and especially through ignorance, must continue almost unabated" (p. 18). Undoubtedly vivisection is the lesser of the two evils, and, as the author points out, those who are opposed to it are enemies to animal welfare, as the knowledge gained by it "is more applicable to the preservation of the lives of animals than of man."

Dr. Gore is probably right when he says that the opposition to vivisection comes, with little exception, from sentimental persons and others professing religion, those who in all ages have opposed scientific research; the author thinks it is reasonable to infer, therefore, "that it is largely directed against the discovery of new knowledge, and the question of infliction of pain is far from being the only consideration." This view is supported by extracts from anti-vivisection publications, some of the statements in which Dr. Gore charitably suggests have "either been made in ignorance of some of the fundamental truths of science, or carelessly, not observing that they were incorrect." Ω.

NOTES.

THE committee appointed to award the prize of one thousand dollars for the best essay, treatise, or manual, adapted to aid and assist teachers in our free public schools, in the Girard college for orphans, and other public or charitable institutions, have decided that no one manuscript presented met the conditions of the offer, but that two of them together did, clearly showing that morality *can* be taught without teaching theology and *how* to do it. The prize was ordered to be equally divided between Nicholas Paine Gilman, A. M., editor of the *Literary World*, Boston, and Edward Payson Jackson, A.M., Professor of Physical Science in the Latin School of Boston. Both treatises "The Laws of Daily Conduct, a Manual of Practical Morals for Teachers and Parents," by Mr. Gilman, and "Dr. Don's Morning Talks: A Colloquy on Good Morals," by Mr. Jackson, will appear in one volume by next fall.

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